

Report on Recommendations from the Testing Task Force
South Carolina Department of Education
July 22, 2005

The Testing Task Force will be reconvened on July 22, 2005 to continue its study of testing in South Carolina. Based on the July meeting, the Department will determine how best to address policy issues. The July meeting will also influence the agenda of the South Carolina Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for Assessment, which will meet October 6 and 7. Issues requiring psychometric study, noted below, are on the agenda for that meeting. After the TAC meets, the Testing Task Force will meet again later in the fall to review the TAC recommendations. The Department's policy and research agendas will reflect the developments stemming from these meetings. The following listing is intended to highlight actions taken to date.

Formative Tests

- The Department has provided flow-through funding to districts for the purchase of formative tests that meet specified criteria. The funding source is K-5 lottery money. In its FY07 budget request, the Department will ask for additional funding in an endeavor to fund formative testing for K-12 next year.
- The Department continues to work on revisions to the benchmark tests in mathematics for grades 6-8, and has plans to expand the revision process to ELA.

Computer Assessment

- The Department expanded computer assessment to include larger pilots and a small comparability study in spring 2006 for end-of-course testing. The summer administration was even more widely accessed online, and the Department is working with its contractors to conduct larger scale comparability study during the 2005-2006 school year.
- The Department and the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) will partner in a study of the readiness of the state for online assessment during 2005-2006 as part of the cyclical review of assessments.
- The Department has been exploring new products and the purchase of additional equipment as funding allows.

Diagnostic Data

- The Department is participating in a national study group and working with its contractors to pilot new approaches to providing strand level information. The pilot for PACT is scheduled for September-October 2005.
- The Department has included this item on its research agenda and TAC agenda.
- The Department will confer with the Testing Task Force to determine if the types of information that could potentially be provided would be useful to students, teachers, and parents.

Standards

- The Department, in cooperation with the EOC, will initiate content standards revision for mathematics and ELA in the fall of 2006 so that the content standards will conform to the recommendations of the Task Force. The Department will include this activity in its FY07 budget request.
- The Department has developed a plan in each of the core content areas including the posting of support documents and taxonomic overlays. In addition:
 - **Social studies:** Standards were developed using a new process that limits the number of standards and provides more clarity. The new standards are posted on the Web site and have been mailed to districts in hardcopy and on CD-ROM. New “Parent Standards” have been provided to the EOC.
 - **Science:** Standards have been drafted using a new process that limits the number of standards and provides more clarity. The new standards will undergo a public review process prior to the development of a final draft.
 - **Mathematics:** The revision process will begin in spring 2006. Support documents are available for the standards that were adopted in 2000. Additional support documents are being developed that will group the standards according to “big ideas” or topics that span grade levels.
 - **English language arts (ELA):** The standards were revised in 2002. Writing support documents were made available to schools for the 2003-2004 school year, and support documents for the other three strands – reading, communications, and research – will be available by the beginning of school. The offices of Assessment and Curriculum and Standards are collaborating to provide additional support to teachers on standards that have been deemed by district/school educators as problematic

Release of Tests and Items

- The Department has identified a form in mathematics on the High School Assessment Program (HSAP) and a form in ELA HSAP for release at the beginning of school in 2005.
- The Department is working with its other contractors to determine which tests and items can be released.
- The Department is conducting a study of the design of the Web site, which will have potential impact on the ease of locating information.

Classroom Assessment

- The Department has been awarded a four-year federal grant to supplement and study its classroom assessment activities.
- The Department has expanded its offerings to include a televised credit-bearing course.

The Amount of Testing

- For 2005-2006, the Department has eliminated the use of constructed response items on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT) in science and social studies, and reduced the number of constructed

response items on PACT mathematics. The cost savings totals \$893,110.64. (Year 3 base cost: \$11,197,839.)

- Future plans by the Department include mechanisms for reducing the amount of field-testing on an annual basis.
- The Department has petitioned the federal government to use the Physical Science examination to meet No Child Left Behind requirements for high school testing.
- The Department will propose amendments to the EAA to replace the requirements for science and social studies exit examinations with requirements for students to take the courses of Physical Science and U.S. History and Constitution.
- If the Department's petition to the federal government is approved and the EAA is amended as indicated in the preceding bullet, the Biology 1/Applied Biology end-of-course test requirement could be removed. These actions would result in elimination of three tests (HSAP Science, HSAP Social Studies, EOCEP Biology 1/Applied Biology 2) and the costs that would be associated with their development, production, and administration.

South Carolina Readiness Assessment (SCRA)

- The Department has scheduled a meeting of the SCRA Advisory Committee (next week) in order to develop mechanisms to reinforce appropriate implementation and differentiation between SCRA and SCRAPI (the on-line ratings system).
- In the spring, the Department announced implementation of a minimum statewide data collection plan and administrator verification system for the 2005-2006 school year.
- The Department will develop a teacher training plan with the funds provided this year and will study the necessity of requesting additional funds for FY07.

In order to implement some of the recommendations, action by the Legislature would be required to amend the law and/or provide funding. These recommendations are listed below, along with recommendations that will require psychometric study for legal and technical defensibility.

Recommendation	Action to Date
Testing should be reduced by developing a sampling design for science and social studies. In such a design every student would take either a social studies test or a science test each year, but not both, except in grades where census testing in science is required to meet NCLB requirements.	Placed on the agenda for the reconvened Task Force.
Equate Algebra 1 and English 1 to grade level PACT so that students are not required to take both tests.	Included in the Department's research agenda as well as the joint EOC-Department cyclical review process.
A differentiated assessment plan should be developed that provides greater assessment focus, and therefore greater information, on certain subjects at particular grades. <i>[Note: Change in law required only if the differentiated assessment plan would alter testing of the four academic content areas.]</i>	Placed on the agenda for the reconvened Task Force.
A task force should be convened to develop recommendations for alternative evidence and procedures that will allow students to meet graduation requirements even if they have failed HSAP.	
Review policies requiring special needs students not on the diploma track to take HSAP more than once to determine feasibility of reducing additional testing based on decisions of IEP teams.	Amendment to <u>24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-262 (Supp. 2004), Assessment Program</u> passed State Board in April. A proviso makes this recommendation effective with testing in Fall 2005.
Require passage of required courses in high school science and social studies in lieu of exit examinations in science and social studies.	The Department will propose this amendment in FY06.
Develop, adopt or adapt a developmentally appropriate reading assessment for use in first and second grades and modify SCRA to include additional literacy assessment for kindergarten.	The SCRA Advisory Committee will address part of this in its meeting on July 27.

Recommendations Requiring Funding

Recommendation	Action to Date
The state should provide a formative assessment system that allows educators to monitor student progress during the school year.	K-5 lottery funds provided in FY06. The Department will request additional funding in FY07 for K-12.
The state should position itself to administer and score all assessments electronically.	Based on the results of the study of readiness for online assessment, the Department will craft a budget request to meet infrastructure and development costs.
Develop and implement a long-term teacher-training plan designed to ensure the valid and reliable use of SCRA within classrooms.	The Department will craft a budget request utilizing input from the SCRA Advisory Committee.
Conduct a controlled cost and program effectiveness study of online testing within our state program.	As part of the EOC-Department cyclical review of assessment, the Department will utilize funds currently appropriated for policy research to conduct this study. Based on the results of the study, future budget requests will be made.
Adopt a data warehouse that will make retrieval and analysis of student data easy for teachers and administrators	Please see response above.
The early administration of PACT in writing.	DRC informs us that “[a]dministering writing in March will not dramatically reduce reporting time.” Although eliminating writing from the May administration would reduce the contract costs for a given year by about \$881,250, the March administration would add costs of \$2,226,442 or more. The cost for the year 3 base program would rise from \$11,197,839 to \$12,543,031.

Recommendations Requiring Psychometric Study

Equating Algebra 1 and English 1 to grade level PACT so that students are not required to take both tests.	The Department has included this item on the TAC agenda as well as the agenda for the reconvened Task Force. In addition, this will become part of the joint cyclical review.
Comparability of computer delivered tests and paper-and-pencil forms.	The Department in conjunction with its contractor will conduct a comparability study on the EOCEP. The TAC will advise in the design of this study.
Reliable strand level reporting and associated reports.	See page 1, “Diagnostic Data”
Vertically equating the PACT reading and mathematics tests.	The Department is participating in a national study group and has included this item on its research agenda and TAC agenda.
The construction of PACT at cut scores and the change of cut scores.	The Department will collaborate with the EOC in the study of this topic as part of the cyclical review. The topic is also part of the TAC agenda.
The early administration of PACT in writing.	Placed on the agenda for the reconvened Task Force and the TAC.